Introduction to Creative Writing
Spring 2025

Professor: Wendy Wallace
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Materials

Textbook

Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott

All other readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Description

In this class, we will be focusing on reading and producing good writing. The first half of the class will focus on fiction, and the second half on poetry.

You will be writing and revising your own work, reading and critiquing the work of others, and reading poems, short stories, and essays on craft. Participation is integral to success in this course. You are expected to speak in class, and to act as a resource for your fellow writers. Within the class, we will build a supportive environment to create and express ourselves.

Learning Goals

Students in Intro to Creative Writing will:

- Compose drafts of fiction and poetry for review
- Submit complete manuscripts
- Review and mark manuscripts for in-class critique
- Participate in the workshop community as writer and reviewer
- Review initial drafts of fiction and poetry based on workshop review and in-class readings and discussions
- Understand and use terms integral to literature and the craft thereof
- Read and discuss professional work in terms of craft and content
- Apply elements of literary craft to their own writing
- Write about the craft of fiction and poetry

Course Work

You will write three poems and one story for this class. We will workshop each of these pieces as a class. You will post your drafts online using Google Docs. Although the work you will turn in will be drafts, they should not be first drafts. They should be finished, polished, and thoughtful. While these

stories and poems by no means need to be perfect, you should feel that you can stand behind your writing.

Format
All work should be Google documents unless otherwise specified. Pages should have a one-inch margin on all sides. Use a 12-point serif font. Include your name on the first page, and page numbers with your last name in a footer on every page. Poetry is typically single-spaced by default (though form may control spacing). Poems should be left-justified, not centered. Fiction should be double-spaced.

Participation
Each person is expected to contribute thoughtfully and actively to the group every day. Not only do your comments help you form and understand your own ideas on writing, they help your peers as well.

Writing Journal
In addition to in-class participation, you will engage with course readings in a journal. This journal will be a written record of your responses to authors' work in which you reflect upon what strikes you about each piece, and what you might use in your own work. This allows you to organize your thoughts and develop an awareness of how you can borrow ideas and apply craft when you get down to the act of creation. These entries do not need to be formal, and can be in bullet or note format. However, they must show thoughtful exploration of the text, and should include quotations – anything from phrases to passages. Each entry will be due by the start of class as an assignment on Blackboard.

Comments
Giving thorough and thoughtful comments to your fellow classmates is incredibly useful for the revision process, because it gives the writer a written record of what is strong and needs work within each piece. It is also useful for you to learn how to articulate what is happening in work, so that you can be more aware when you approach your own writing. Your comments will be due on the day that each piece is work shopped.

For fiction, you will need to identify aspects of the draft that are successful and suggestions for what the author can do to improve These comments must be specific, and explain your thoughts in full sentences. They must be provided on Google Docs under the Workshop Comments folder for your workshop group.

For poetry, you will need to identify aspects of the poem that are working well and make three suggestions for revisions. As with fiction, you need to be specific and explanatory in your comments.

If your comments are not posted by the beginning of class on which the pieces are workshopped, you will lose half credit.

Workshop Schedule
You will be scheduled for one fiction workshop and three poetry workshops. I will post the schedule under Course Schedule. All drafts will be due on the same date.

Conferences
I am available throughout the semeste by appointment to discuss your work with you. Feel free to contact me to schedule a Zoom meeting if you want to hash through ideas, discuss the writing process, or talk through revisions. I'm always happy to meet with you, especially before you submit your portfolios.

Fiction Portfolio
At the end of the semester, you will submit a fiction portfolio that includes your revised short story, the original draft, and a reflection letter (one page double-spaced) that describes your revision process, what you are taking away from the workshops and readings, and the strengths and weaknesses/challenges successes you see in your own work. I will not grade you on how "good" your story is, but rather on how seriously you took the revision process. You should make considerable changes in your draft – even if it causes more problems, I'd rather you take some risks than be cautious and fearful to try things. Don't be afraid to get messy and play around with your work. This is how you leanr and disocver!

Poetry Portfolio
At the end of the semester, you will submit three revised poems along with the rough drafts and a reflection letter (one page double-spaced) that, like your fiction letter, addresses your process. The same philosophy of revision applies to poetry. I would rather see that you are taking chances than be precious with your work. Show me that serious thought and effort went into your rewriting.

Course Policies

College of Liberal Arts Classroom Civility Statement
Southern Connecticut State University is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion and welcomes individuals of all ages, religions, sex, sexual orientations, races, nationalities, languages, military experience, disabilities, family statuses, gender identities and expressions, political

views, and socioeconomic statuses. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by everyone in this course. Behaviors that threaten, harass, discriminate or that are disrespectful ofothers will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behaviors will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Attendance
Attendance is worth 100 points. I take attendance at the beginning of class each day. If you are more than five minutes late, I will mark you as absent. If you have a legitimate reason for being late, see me after class and we can discuss the circumstances.

If you need to miss class, reach out to me via email as soon as possible to let me know, I will give you the activities from class and allow you 48 hours to send me class work for full credit for the day you've missed. If you do not contact me, I will mark you absent and you will not receive credit for that day.

Note If you are sick, DO NOT come to class. Stay home and take care of yourself, and email me for the work you missed. If you arrive to class visibly ill, I will send you home.

Workshop Etiquette and Practices
A successful workshop experience depends on a number of factors: honesty, tact, clarity, close reading, and the ability to see the work for what it is meant to be. Giving good, honest feedback helps everyone; you will learn from analyzing the work, and the author will learn about the reader's experience, which will help them shape later drafts. Empty positive feedback (e.g. "This was a really great! I enjoyed it!") helps no one, but neither does rudeness. You may find it helpful to structure your comments around balance of positive and negative; ask yourself first what's happening, or what the author is attempting, and how (what devices and techniques are they trying?), then look for what's working and what isn't based on your interpretation. What-ifs can be helpful, but be wary of attempting to rewrite a piece to your own specifications or preferences.

Plagiarism
Do not submit any writing that is not entirely your work. While programs like ChatGPT can be useful for checking grammar and brainstorming, the actual writing itself must be entirely your own. The first instance of plagiarism will receive a zero. If there is a second instance, you will be reported to the university for academic dishonesty. Don't let this happen to you. If you're unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, ask me.